

## OUR LAKE COMMERCE.

One Class of American Vessels That Make Handsome Profits.

### INTERESTING INSIDE FIGURES.

Details of the Great Business Done Both in Grain and Ore.

### WHY CAPITAL IS ALWAYS WILLING

ASHLAND, Wis., Oct. 19.—After sailing over the wide, black surface of Lake Superior for two entire days, without much more of land visible than the top of the coppery Keweenaw, the sight of the Apostle Islands, over the right bow as the steamer heads in toward Ashland, is sure to make the landlubber grateful; and when the breeze brings from the islands a wild of the pine woods, to give a change to the inspired freshness of the inland sea, and presently the green shores become more clearly outlined, there is a disposition to associate the name of Ashland with picturesque glimpses of land and water, with slopes of grass and fragrant shade, and to recall the old stories about the aborigines who devoted their years of residence here to provide interesting legends for the diversion of modern travelers.

It is good that first impressions are apt to be most lasting. When the vessel has passed the Apostle Islands, and sailing by the Madeline Island, gives you a passing and distant view of Bayfield, Ashland Harbor is reached. The attractiveness of the shore is found to have been greater from a distance. The steamer, if it happens to be one carrying freight "for a living," goes straight to one of many docks that stretch out from the shore and hide most of the view. These docks are each about 1,000 feet long. Each is high, rising perhaps 20 feet above the water, with open piling below and box-like structures above. All are painted a sort of rust color, the better to stand discoloration from ore. In that respect, they resemble the docks, and even the masts and gaffs of the steamer Gladstone, which really has no use for masts or for standing gaffs, and a great deal of use for ore.

### THE SOLITARY CARGO.

Vessels come to Ashland for one thing only. That is for ore—iron ore from the mines of the Gogebic range in Wisconsin. They are arriving continually, and are always in a hurry for loads, so that even the busy miners cannot keep up with them. This is a great iron ore section. Mr. George H. Ely of Cleveland, an expert finds that Lake Superior supplied in 1890 half the material for the iron output of the country. All that the shipper needs is the mines is the product. He brings his vessel up to a long dock, where there is room for two more vessels of the same length, which may be 300 feet. He can crawl out to the land end of the dock by a walkway, and the ore pockets just a plank wide, and his head almost touch the bottom of the ore bins as he walks along. When he has come to the shore end of the pier he only sees a raw and unpicturesque new town, in which the conversations at the hotel or the newspaper office are apt to be about the arrivals of the ore ships, the freight rate to Cleveland, and the latest "boom" news from West Superior.

Ashland is all ore. The houses are not built of it, but they were built by it, and they seem to take on the same reddish, iron-ore tinge that Captain Holmes has painted the deck of his ship and the standing cables, just to anticipate the tendency of the ore to surreptitiously stain the unpainted wood. The bell of the locomotive rings at all times of the day, as the ore trains come down with their loads and their drivers. The railroad runs down upon the docks above the ore pockets, a rail to each row of pockets. The openings of these pockets are toward opposite sides of the dock, so that vessels can load and unload at the same time. At regular distances are hung up what look like halves of steamboat funnels, secured to the dock at the lower end by a hinge. The intervals between these funnel-like rings are found to correspond to the intervals between the rows of ships, and when the funnels are dropped, with a great clanking of rusty chains, it is found that a hinge at the bottom is just beneath a door. When five of the funnels have been adjusted to admit a new ship, bolts are pulled from as many doors, the ore behind and above, pressing upon the shelving bottom and seeking a level, shoots down the funnel into the hold of the vessel, and presently—this is to be expected—two, depending upon whether the ore is damp or dry—the vessel is loaded with 2,500 to 3,000 tons.

### MINERS MUST BE ACTIVE.

It requires a great deal of activity on the part of the miners and the railroad to keep the ore bins full and the ships loaded. The ore bins fall into two classes. There are 200 tons, but that does not occupy much space in the ample pockets. A load of 3,200 tons only fills the lower hold of a vessel as large as the Bradley steamer Gladstone, one of the largest and newest of the ore ships on the lakes. When the load is in, it is to look at like so much damp sawdust with a few lumps of rock in it. Before the pockets have come to discharge the contents into the hold, a lot of hardy Scandinavians have divested themselves of all clothing except their trousers, and with their shovels they "trim" or level the load for steady carriage. The ore bins are leveled and leveling are soon over, and if the master of the vessel has made good use of his time he has laid in all the supplies he will need for the return trip, and on his way down the harbor again in a few hours.

Sometimes there are no many vessels in port ahead of him that he must wait his turn at the dock, and when there have been many vessels at work taking the docks it may be necessary to wait for arrivals of ore trains.

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### RECORD OF THE PORTS.

But look at the record of the business done at Ashland and Two Harbors. Ashland ships the Gogebic ore, and in 1890 it sent 1,863,921 tons of ore to the smelters on the lower lakes. The whole lake product in the year was 7,077,107, and Ashland stood third as a shipping port, Escanaba, in Michigan, leading, and Bayfield, quite half in amount of the product of all the lake mining region. Marquette was second, and Two Harbors, which shipped its first ton of ore in 1884, followed the properties of the range were left in a developed, fourth, with a record of 836,541 tons. The record of the story of this Vermilion

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